

## CHAPTER III

### THE ABDICATION OF DIOCLETIAN AND THE SUCCESSION OF CONSTANTINO

ON the 1st of May, in the year 305, Diocletian, by an act of unexampled abnegation, resigned the purple and retired into private life. The renunciation was publicly performed, not in Rome, for Rome had ceased to be the centre of the political world, but on a broad plain in Bithynia, three miles from Nicomedia, which long had been the Emperor's favourite residence. In the centre of the plain rose a little hill, upon which stood a column surmounted by a statue of Jupiter. There, years before, Diocletian had with his own hands invested Galerius with the symbols of power; there he was now to perform the last act of a ruler by nominating those whom he thought most fit to succeed him. A large platform had been constructed ; the soldiers of the legions had been ordered to assemble in soldier's meeting and listen to their chiefs farewell. Diocletian took leave of them in few words. He was old, he said, and infirm. He craved for rest a life of toil. The Empire needed stronger